Asbestos factories

*307. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has recently conducted a study through the National Institute of Occupational Health to assess the extent of betterment in the working conditions in the Asbestos factories all over the country.

(b) if so, a summary of the findings of the study;

(c) whether the asbestos industry in the private sector had contributed funds for the conduct of the study in addition to the allocation made by Government; and

(d) whether Government is likely to present this report, finalized in consultation with asbestos industry, at the Chemical Review Committee of the UN at Rotterdam in March, 2008 to rationalize its third veto against UN sanctions on asbestos industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH), Ahmedabad has been entrusted with a study on environmental and health impacts of the usages of Chrysotile Asbestos with an objective to find out the concentration of asbestos fibres in the work zone and to assess the health status of the workers and the residents in the vicinity of the industry. The study is in progress in major Asbestos based products manufacturing units located in Kolkata, Silvasa, Vapi and Hyderabad.

(c) Out of a total of Rs. 59.66 lacs allocated for the study by Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, the Asbestos Cement Products Manufactures Association has contributed Rs. 16 lacs.

(d) Since the NIOH study is still under progress, no report was presented before the Chemical Review Committee of Rotterdam Convention held at Geneva during March, 10—13, 2008.

Brahmaputra waterways project

*308. SHRI TARINI KANTA ROY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of Brahmaputra waterways project;

(b) whether Government has received any demand for making this project as "International Project"; and

(c) if so, the response of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) The river Brahmapatra from Sadiya to Dhubri (891 km.) was declared as National Waterway in 1988. Various infrastructure development project *i.e.*, for the development of fairway, navigational aids and terminals are being implemented in this National Waterway through Inland Waterways Authority of India. The Waterway is being developed to provide at least 2m available depth for 330 days in a year between Dhubri-Dibrugarh and 1.5m between Dibrugarh-Sadiya. Permanent terminal at Pandu is under construction by CPWD. Floating terminals at Dhubri, Jogighopa Pandu, Tejpur, Silghat, Jamuguri, Neamati and Dibrugarh have been provided. The terminal at Jogighopa is also being developed for loading coal. Day navigation channel marks are available/provided in the entire waterway. Night navigation facility is also provided in Dhubri to Pandu stretch which is being extended in the entire waterway supplemented with Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS).

(b) and (c) No specific demand for making this waterway as 'International Project' has